

## Case 2838

***Pleurobranchus forskalii* Rüppell & Leuckart, [1828] and  
*P. testudinarius* Cantraine, 1835 (Mollusca, Gastropoda): proposed  
conservation of the specific names**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this application is to conserve the specific names of the pleurobranch opisthobranch molluscs *Pleurobranchus forskalii* Rüppell & Leuckart, [1828] and *P. testudinarius* Cantraine, 1835. The latter name is threatened by the senior objective synonym *Pleurobranchus forskahli* Delle Chiaje, 1822. Additionally, it is shown that the name 'Lepus marinus' mentioned by Forsskål (1776) and others is a vernacular.

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1. Forsskål's Atlas of Plates of 'oriental nature' observed on an expedition to Arabia was published posthumously in 1776. The illustrations were identified by a list of binominal latinised names, most with no accompanying description or reference to a description. The few references to descriptive material or previously published names were printed in italicised type. Plate 28A is an easily recognised figure of a common Indo-West Pacific pleurobranch opisthobranch mollusc at present known as *Pleurobranchus forskalii* Rüppell & Leuckart, [1828]. Forsskål's entry to this figure reads: 'A. *Lepus marinus*. Arab. Arneb bachri. Avicenna. Libr. II. pag. 63'. In Forsskål's text new names are in roman typeface, while names given by earlier authors are italicised. On page 9, three names are italicised. Two of these, *Ascidia gelatinosum* and *Ascidia quadridentata*, are referred to Linnaeus, while the third, *Lepus marinus*, is referred to Avicenna, the Arab physician (980–1037 AD) who republished and commented on the writings of the early Greeks and Romans. The phrase 'Arneb bachri' mentioned by Forsskål in the entry for '*Lepus marinus*' can be loosely translated from Arabic as 'wild rabbit'. The name '*Lepus marinus*' has been used at least since Roman times (see Cuvier, 1803; Rang, 1828; Eales, 1921, 1960) and was applied generally to sea hares and large sea slugs, usually *Aplysia*. Linnaeus (1758, p. 653), in the 10th edition of *Systema Naturae*, listed four earlier uses of '*Lepus marinus*' under his genus *Tethys*, some of which apply to an aplysiid and others to the nudibranch *Tethys*. Linnaeus (p. 57) introduced the mammalian name *Lepus*, evidently distinguishing between the formal mammalian genus *Lepus* and the informal vernacular use of the descriptive name for sea hares and similar gastropods.

2. Forsskål's (1776) illustration was referred to by both Cuvier (1817, p. 396) and Lamarck (1819, p. 339) as probably a specimen of *Pleurobranchus peronii* Cuvier, 1804; this is in fact a different species. Lamarck's reference (1819, p. 339) to the illustration as 'An *Lepus marinus*?' suggests that he did not consider Forsskål's name to be more than a descriptive vernacular name. Rüppell & Leuckart ([1828], pp. 18–20, pl. 5, figs. 2a, b)

gave the name *Pleurobranchus forskålii* to the species illustrated by Forsskål, and referred to his use of the name 'Lepus marinus'.

3. Article 11b of the Code requires that to be available a name 'must be... used as a scientific name by the author when published'. It is clear that Forsskål did not use 'Lepus marinus' as a scientific name and that none of the authors listed above (Cuvier, Lamarck, Leuckart, Linnaeus and Rüppell) accepted it as such, although it consists of two Latin words. However, Sherborn (1902) listed *Lepus marinus* Forsskål without comment as an apparently available name, as did Pilsbry (1896) in his use of the binomen *Oscanius marinus* Forsskål as valid for *forskålii* Rüppell & Leuckart.

4. The earliest available name for Forsskål's Indo-West Pacific species has generally been thought to be *Pleurobranchus forskålii* Rüppell & Leuckart, [1828]. However, Delle Chiaje used the name *Pleurobranchus forskahli* for a different species endemic to the Mediterranean. With one exception, all workers have considered the date of publication of both names to be 1828 (see Winckworth, 1942, for dates of publication of Rüppell & Leuckart) and have treated *P. forskahli* Delle Chiaje (November 1828, p. 154) as a junior homonym of *Pleurobranchus forskålii* Rüppell & Leuckart. The exception is Issel who (1869, p. 162) proposed the replacement name *P. ruppellii* for Rüppell & Leuckart's species, but this has been ignored. Delle Chiaje's specific name *forskahli* is normally cited as available from November 1828. However, an Atlas of Plates containing the relevant figures was published in 1822. The name *Pleurobranchus forskahli* appears at the bottom of pl. 41, referring to fig. 11, thereby making that specific name available from 1822. In his 1828 publication Delle Chiaje, after a two-line Latin description followed by 'nobis', cited Forsskål's reference as 'An Lepus marinus? FORSKAHL Fn. arab. tab xxviii'. Although Delle Chiaje identified his species with Forsskål's this was incorrect and his illustration and description show that he was introducing a new name for the Mediterranean species. Cantraine (1835) recognized that there were two distinct species. He proposed the replacement name *Pleurobranchus testudinarius* for the Mediterranean species in the belief that the two names were homonyms and on the mistaken assumption that Rüppell & Leuckart's name had priority. Cantraine's description bears the annotation 'V. Leuckart' implying that he was acting on advice from Leuckart. Under Article 32d(1) *forskålii* must be corrected to *forskahlii*; this spelling is not identical to *forskahli* and under Article 57f they cannot be treated as homonyms.

5. It follows from this argument that the names *Pleurobranchus forskahli* Delle Chiaje, 1822 (for the Mediterranean species) and *P. forskålii* Rüppell & Leuckart, [1828] (for the Indo-West Pacific species) are both available. The Indo-West Pacific species has been given many names, but the two most consistently and recently used are *Pleurobranchus forskålii* Rüppell & Leuckart and *P. semperi* (Vayssièrè, 1896) for the dark and light colour forms respectively. The Mediterranean species, after a period of nomenclatural confusion (see Pilsbry, 1896), has consistently had the specific name *testudinarius* Cantraine, 1835 applied to it in combination with the generic name *Pleurobranchus* or two of its synonyms, *Oscanius* Gray, 1847 and *Susania* Gray, 1857 (see Willan, 1987). Authors using the name *testudinarius* in these combinations include Haefelfinger (1960, pp. 334, 347), Schmekel (1968, pp. 113, 149) and Cattaneo-Vietti & Thompson (1989, p. 195); a further 20 papers are held by the Commission Secretariat. To adopt the prior name *Pleurobranchus forskahli* Delle Chiaje, 1822 would cause great confusion, not only because the species is currently known as *P. testudinarius*, but also because the very similar name *P. forskålii* is used for the Indo-West Pacific species,

which has also entered the eastern Mediterranean through the Suez Canal (Barash & Danin, 1977, pp. 97, 103).

6. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *forskahli* Delle Chiaje, 1822, as published in the binomen *Pleurobranchus forskahli*, for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;
- (2) to place the following names on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology:
  - (a) *forskahli* Rüppell & Leuckart, [1828], as published in the binomen *Pleurobranchus forskahli*;
  - (b) *testudinarius* Cantraine, 1835, as published in the binomen *Pleurobranchus testudinarius*;
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *forskahli* Delle Chiaje, 1822, as published in the binomen *Pleurobranchus forskahli* and as suppressed in (1) above.

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